

Teaching Guide

Hotel Fire Safety

for staff



Hotel Fire Safety

Instructor Outline

Introduction

■ Goals:

To ensure that hotel employees are knowledgeable in emergency response and fire prevention.

■ Objectives:

Employees should be able to:

- describe the emergency procedures for their hotel in case of fire.
- identify common fire hazards and how to prevent them.
- demonstrate the correct manner in which to assist in guest evacuation.
- identify special situations or individuals that may require an emergency response different than the standard response.

■ Materials:

- Your facility's emergency response plan
- Video (obtained from Seattle Fire Department) *Hotel Fire Alert*

Instructor Information

Factors of Hotel Fires

■ Complexity

Hotel fires are more complex than many other occupancies because of:

- 1) High occupancy loads
- 2) Guests' unfamiliarity with the building.
- 3) Many guests may not speak English and/or may have difficulty understanding oral or written directions.

■ Causes

The major causes of fires in hotels are smoking materials, electrical, cooking fires and arson.

■ Hazards

Common fire and life safety hazards to watch for include:

Missing/broken fire safety equipment	Locked exit doors
Accumulated trash	Blocked stairways
Open fire doors	Burned out exit lights

■ Human Error

Many major hotel fires have shared several characteristics of human error:

- 1) delayed notification of the Fire Department
- 2) delayed notification of guests
- 3) uncorrected hazards (electrical, cigarette in mattress, etc.)

■ Critical Life Safety Features

- 1) Smoke detectors in every room save occupant's lives. If a fire starts in a guest room, the occupant has, on average, two minutes to get out alive. A smoke detector will give the necessary warning to facilitate escape.
- 2) Self-closing doors (fire doors, stairwell doors) save lives by confining the smoke, flames and heat and leaving evacuation routes clear. It is imperative that these doors are not blocked or propped open.
- 3) Sprinklers work to limit fire spread to the room of fire origin. 96% of fires in which automatic sprinklers are present are extinguished or contained by three or fewer sprinkler heads. There has been no multiple loss of life in the United States in buildings in which sprinklers were functioning correctly.

Fire Response Plans

■ Have a fire emergency plan.

It is important for your hotel to have an updated fire emergency plan. This plan should be in writing, and easily available to all employees. This includes those who work weekends and nights. If your hotel is a high rise, the Seattle Fire Department requires that you maintain an Emergency Operations Plan for your facility. A copy is to be filed with the Fire Marshal's Office, another copy kept at the fire alarm panel. For further information, visit the Seattle Fire Department website at www.cityofseattle.net/fire or call the Public Education Office at 386-1337.

■ Become familiar with your facility's fire and life safety systems.

Prior to your program, become familiar with your facility's fire and life safety systems. Know which of the following your building has, as well as their location and use:

Manual pull alarms	Fire extinguishers
Smoke detectors	Fire alarm monitoring service
Exit doors & stairwells	Voice alarm system/Intercom
Sprinklers	Fire doors

When a fire happens...

■ Treat every alarm as though it is a real emergency, even if the initial source is unknown.

It is imperative that every alarm is treated as though it is a real emergency, even if the initial source is unknown. If the alarm sounds, or a fire is suspected, call the Fire Department immediately. After calling the Fire Department, if you determine that there is no fire, but rather a malfunction of your equipment or a false alarm, call 911 and relay this information. **Never wait to investigate the situation before notifying the Fire Department. Any delay will allow a fire to grow and further endanger the building occupants and property.**

DO NOT *silence* the alarm until given permission to do so by Fire Department personnel or by the emergency operator. DO NOT *reset* the alarm until the Fire Department arrives and has investigated the source of the alarm. All fire alarms are to be investigated by the Fire Department.

■ Remember your emergency number -- 9•1•1.

It's important for employees calling 911 to be able to give the following information: nature of the problem, location, address, nearest cross street, any specifics known. The caller should not hang up until told to do so by the emergency operator.

■ Do not use elevators.

Elevators should never be used by building occupants during a fire emergency. The reason is three fold: 1) elevators may fail during a fire, trapping occupants; 2) elevator shafts may fill with smoke; and 3) the elevator needs to be available for the use of arriving firefighters. Occupants must exit by way of stairwells only. For information on evacuation procedures for non-ambulatory persons, refer to the handout *Fire Evacuation Procedures For Persons Unable To Use Exit Stairs*. Call 386-1337 for a copy.

■ If trapped, create an area of refuge.

If guests or staff are unable to leave the building, they should create an area of refuge. **Seal the room** Use wet cloth to stuff around cracks in doors and seal up vents to protect against smoke. **Do not break windows** Flames and smoke can come back in from the outside. If you need air, open the window a crack. **Stay low under smoke** The freshest air is near the floor. Keep a wet cloth over your nose and mouth, breath through your nose only. **Signal for help** Use the telephone, or hang something in the window.

■ Fire extinguishers

Fire Code requirements specify the size, number and location of fire extinguishers within your facility. These requirements help establish a protection level appropriate for the hazard class of your building. Make sure you know the types, sizes and maintenance requirements of your extinguishers, as well as the basics of extinguisher operation.

Lesson Outline

■ Review your facility's Emergency Response Plan

Make sure all employees have access to a copy of your facility's written emergency response plan. Review the procedures as a group and make sure that they are clear to everyone.

■ View the video: *HOTEL FIRE ALERT*

This film covers staff response in the event of a fire and also how to identify and respond to common hotel fire hazards. The film is appropriate for a variety of employee audiences, even those that are non-English speaking, as many situations are acted out as well as explained verbally. Focuses primarily on housekeeping and kitchen staff.

■ Discuss what to do if a fire is discovered

Staff should understand that their quick response is important if they:

- 1) discover a fire.
- 2) see smoke coming from under a door.
- 3) hear the fire alarm, but don't see or smell fire.

Most importantly staff should understand the need for quick evacuation and calling 911 immediately.

■ Discuss your building's fire and life safety systems.

Discuss your building's fire and life safety systems. Does everyone know what and where they are, and how they work? Which of the following does your building have and what is their importance in a fire...smoke detectors, manual pull alarms, elevators, stairwells, fire doors, alarm system, sprinklers, etc.?

■ Discuss hazards of your facility.

Discuss hazards particular to your facility. What can you identify and what precautions should be taken? Have staff from different areas identify hazards common to their work area (kitchen, laundry, housekeeping, maintenance, night staff, etc.)

■ Hold a fire drill.

Have a drill within a month of your program in order for staff to practice the emergency response plan. Everyone have the opportunity to physically run through the procedures. Studies indicate that unless adults actually practice safety behaviors, they very well may not be able to perform them correctly when the need arises.



Scenarios

Use the following scenarios to stimulate discussion on emergency response procedures.

- 1) You are making up a room, your cart is in the hallway. You make the bed and go into the hallway to get towels from your cart. You smell smoke from a room at the end of the hall. As soon as you smell the smoke, the alarm goes off. What should you do?
- 2) You are staffing the front desk in the hotel lobby when you receive a call from hotel personnel that there is a fire. What do you do?
- 3) You are in the kitchen and a grease fire breaks out. What do you do? Take this a step further - smoke filters into the restaurant where hotel guests are having dinner. What do you do?
- 4) The fire alarm goes off on the floor. You don't know where the fire is. Guests wander out into the hallway to see what happened. What do you do to assist in the safe evacuation of hotel guests? What if some guests do not speak English?
- 5) You enter a room and discover a cigarette was carelessly tossed into the wastepaper basket and it is smoldering. What do you do?
- 6) As you are making a bed in one of the guest rooms you discover a cigarette burn in the bed sheet. Keeping in mind that a cigarette burn can smolder for hours before actually igniting the mattress or upholstery, what do you do?
- 7) The fire alarm has sounded and as people come out into the hallway you direct them to the nearest stairway. A hotel guest exits his room in a wheelchair. What do you do to assist this individual in a safe evacuation?
- 8) It is late in the evening and you are delivering room service. As you knock on the door the fire alarm sounds. Guests do not seem to be coming out of their rooms. You knock harder. Some hotel guests open their doors and sleepily look in the hallway. What procedures should you follow? What if some guests refuse to evacuate this late in the evening?